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Methodological issues under the Convention
Work programme on the revision of the guidelines for the review of biennial reports and national communications, including national inventory reviews, for developed country Parties

Draft training programme for review experts for the technical review of information reported under the Convention related to biennial reports and national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document presents a draft training programme for review experts for the technical review of national communications and biennial reports of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, as requested by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) at its thirty-ninth session. The secretariat has prepared the document for consideration by the SBSTA with the objective of formalizing the training provided to review experts of national communications and biennial reports and the subsequent assessment of experts' qualifications, as well as of providing additional guidance to the secretariat on such matters.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), at its thirty-ninth session, recommended a draft decision on the guidelines for the review of national communications (NCs) and biennial reports (BRs) for adoption by the Conference of the Parties (COP).[1] Following that recommendation, COP 19 adopted the "Guidelines for the technical review of information reported under the Convention related to greenhouse gas inventories, biennial reports and national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention" (hereinafter referred to as the review guidelines).[2]

2. SBSTA 39 welcomed the presentation made by the secretariat on the development of relevant new training materials and procedures as requested by SBSTA 38[3] and took note of the training materials. It recognized the importance of implementing the training of review experts before the review of the submitted sixth national communications (NC6s) and first biennial reports (BR1s) in the first half of 2014. It requested the secretariat to make the materials available by electronic means for the review experts participating in the reviews in 2014 and to develop a formal training programme for consideration at SBSTA 40.[4]

3. The review guidelines adopted by the COP state that experts participating in technical reviews shall have recognized competence in the areas to be reviewed, and that the training to be provided to the experts, and the subsequent assessment after the completion of the training[5] and/or any other means needed to ensure the necessary competence of the experts for their participation in expert review teams (ERTs), shall be designed and operationalized by the secretariat in accordance with relevant decisions of the COP.[6]

4. The review guidelines also state that the secretariat shall design and implement training activities for review experts, including lead reviewers, and the subsequent assessment of the experts' qualifications, under the guidance of the SBSTA.[7]

B. Scope of the note

5. This document presents a draft training programme for review experts for the technical review of NCs and BRs of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties), as requested by SBSTA 39. Background information on the training programme is presented in chapter II and the draft training programme is contained in the annex.

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[1] FCCC/SBSTA/2013/5, paragraph 66.
[2] Decision 23/CP.19, annex.
[3] FCCC/SBSTA/2013/3, paragraph 97.
[4] FCCC/SBSTA/2013/5, paragraph 67.
[5] The experts who opt not to participate in the training have to undergo a similar assessment successfully to enable them to qualify for participation in expert review teams.
[6] Decision 23/CP.19, annex, paragraph 29.
[7] Decision 23/CP.19, annex, paragraph 52.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

6. The SBSTA may wish to take note of the draft training programme contained in the annex, with a view to preparing and recommending a draft decision for consideration and adoption by COP 20 and to providing additional relevant guidance to the secretariat.

II. Training programme

7. In line with the current reporting requirements under the Convention, Annex I Parties submit NCs every four to five years and national greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories on an annual basis. To date, Annex I Parties have submitted five NCs on a mandatory basis since 1994. Accordingly, each NC is reviewed every four to five years by an ERT, mostly by means of in-country review visits.

8. The implementation of the existing review process made a major contribution to improving Annex I Parties' reporting, including major improvements in the consistency, transparency, comparability, completeness and accuracy of the reported information. However, the process is very resource intensive and has resulted in increasing pressure on Parties, experts and the secretariat in recent years. A number of problems have been identified by the secretariat and raised on various occasions in the past,[8] including the severe shortage of available experts with the necessary professional expertise and experience to conduct the reviews and the increasing pressure being placed on the secretariat in providing support.

9. Such problems could become particularly important with the significantly increased volume of work during the reviews under the newly established international assessment and review (IAR) process following the submission of the NC6s and BR1s by developed country Parties on 1 January 2014.[9] The first round of the IAR process commenced immediately after the submission of the NC6s and BR1s in the last week of February 2014. As from 2014, BRs will be reviewed every two years, where relevant, in conjunction with the review of NCs. The upcoming IAR process involves the technical review and multilateral assessment of the information contained in NCs, BRs and national GHG inventories. The IAR process will necessitate increased resources and efforts of Parties, experts and the secretariat.

10. Past experience shows that the ongoing training of experts for the review of GHG inventories and supplementary information submitted under the Kyoto Protocol has greatly contributed to the rigour and consistency of the review process. That, in turn, has contributed to a significant increase in the quality of GHG inventories, including their transparency, accuracy, completeness, consistency and comparability. As a result of training activities, experts have improved and updated their professional knowledge and technical skills, enabling consistency across reviews to be achieved. Experts have also gained more clarity on the review tasks thanks to training activities, which has helped to improve the efficiency of the review process and shorten the time needed for each specific review task.

11. However, there are only requirements for the training of experts for the review of GHG inventories and supplementary information submitted under the Kyoto Protocol; there are no such requirements for the training of experts participating in the review of NCs. The lack of training for experts involved in the NC review process has made, to some extent, the

[8] See documents FCCC/SBSTA/2012/INF.8 and FCCC/SBSTA/2012/INF.10.
[9] Decision 2/CP.17, paragraphs 13 and 14.

review activities more cumbersome and time-consuming and has, in some cases, undermined the quality of the reviews. At previous sessions of the SBSTA, Parties have discussed and explored the possibility of extending the current training experience for the review of GHG inventories to the experts engaged in the NC and BR review process. The current training activities, limited to the review of GHG inventories and supplementary information submitted under the Kyoto Protocol, need to be enhanced to address the most important elements of the review of NCs and BRs.

12. The current training curriculum needs to be supplemented with specific training courses on key elements of the review of NCs and BRs; in particular, in areas such as the review of progress made towards emission reduction targets, policies and measures and their mitigation effects, emission projections and the provision of financial, technological and capacity-building support, as well as the general and cross-cutting aspects of the technical review process. This would enhance the competence of experts involved in the review of NCs and bring more clarity to the review process, consequently improving the quality of the experts' contribution to the review process. It would also address the experts' needs in relation to the review of BRs, given the new elements included in the reports as well as the new rules and procedures and the recently adopted review guidelines.

13. With the aim of addressing such needs, SBSTA 38 requested the secretariat to begin the development of new training materials and procedures before the review of the submitted NC6s and BR1s and to present developed training materials and procedures at SBSTA 39. Those training materials covered the reporting requirements and the procedures for the general aspects of the NC and BR review process.[10]

14. On the basis of those materials, the secretariat has prepared a draft training programme for the technical review of NCs and BRs of Annex I Parties, to be implemented in the period 2014–2016, which addresses the elements and issues discussed in paragraphs 8–13 above.

15. The draft training programme, which is contained in the annex, consists of two parts: a general description of the training programme, including scope, format and examination procedures; and a detailed description of the courses, including period of implementation, target audience, type of course and examination requirements and format.

[10] As footnote 3 above.

Annex

Training programme for review experts for the technical review of national communications and biennial reports of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention

A. Details of the training programme

1. The courses are intended to train review experts for the technical review of national communications and biennial reports of Parties included in Annex I to the Convention. All training courses will be available online. For trainees without easy access to the Internet, courses will be distributed using electronic means. At the request of a Party, the courses can also be made available to others interested in the review process, provided that this does not require additional resources. All courses will be available to trainees all year round.

2. All training courses will include an examination. Examination procedures will be standardized, objective and transparent.

3. The examination will take place online. In exceptional circumstances, other arrangements for examinations will be made, provided that the examinations take place under the supervision of the secretariat and that this does not require additional resources.

4. New review experts who successfully complete the relevant requirements of the training programme and pass the examinations will be invited to participate in a centralized or in-country review, working alongside experienced review experts.

5. Experts who do not pass an examination for a course at the first attempt may retake the examination once only, provided that the expert has fulfilled all of the tasks assigned during the training course in a timely manner and that the retake does not require the secretariat to incur additional costs.

B. Courses of the training programme

1. General and cross-cutting aspects of the review of national communications and biennial reports

Description: This course covers the reporting requirements and the procedures for the general aspects of the process of the review of national communications and biennial reports under the Convention and aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the reporting and review requirements and guidance to expert review teams on the process and steps for conducting reviews under the international assessment and review process. The course promotes consistency and fairness in the review process by providing technical guidance on the general review approaches and use of tools.
Preparation: 2014
Implementation: 2014–2016
Target audience: New review experts and lead reviewers
Type of course: E-learning, without instructor
Examination requirements and format: New review experts and lead reviewers must pass the examination before participating in expert review teams. Online examination.

2. **Technical review of targets and of policies and measures, their effects and their contribution to achieving those targets**

Description: This course provides general guidance and approaches for the technical review of information on national policy context and greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation targets, policies and measures (PaMs), and the effects of each individual policy or measure and its contribution to the reduction of GHG emissions.
Preparation: 2014
Implementation: 2014–2016
Target audience: New review experts reviewing targets and policies and measures, and lead reviewers
Type of course: E-learning, without instructor
Examination requirements and format: New review experts must pass the examination before participating in expert review teams. Online examination.

3. **Technical review of greenhouse gas emissions, emission trends, projections and the total effect of policies and measures**

Description: This course provides general guidance and approaches for the technical review of information on GHG emissions, emission trends, projections and the total effect of PaMs.
Preparation: 2014
Implementation: 2014–2016
Target audience: New review experts reviewing emission trends, projections and the total effect of PaMs, and lead reviewers
Type of course: E-learning, without instructor
Examination requirements and format: New review experts must pass the examination before participating in expert review teams. Online examination.

4. **Technical review of the provision of financial support, technology transfer and capacity-building**

Description: This course provides general guidance and approaches for the technical review of information on the provision of financial resources by Parties included in Annex II to the Convention to Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention, the promotion, facilitation and financing of the transfer of technology, and capacity-building, including creating national expertise on climate change related issues, strengthening institutions and developing educational, training and awareness-raising activities.
Preparation: 2014
Implementation: 2014–2016
Target audience: New review experts reviewing the provision of financial support, technology transfer and capacity-building, and lead reviewers
Type of course: E-learning, without instructor
Examination requirements and format: New review experts must pass the examination before participating in expert review teams. Online examination.